

Issues Still Outstanding and Future Solutions in Networked Statistic Collection
Mid-FY2002 Houston Public Library
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PROBLEM 1: With the exception of the database statistics, we collected all of the recommended network statistics by branch. Our IP addresses change frequently (once every two years), vendors working with the state library sometimes mis-assign IP addresses, and monthly database statistics collection for the system alone takes about five hours per month. For these reasons and staff shortages, we don't feel that we have the staff to spare to keep this data for 36 agencies.

PARTIAL SOLUTION 1: We have just cut a purchase order for Webfeat, a web search interface that searches multiple databases simultaneously. We bought the optional statistical package which provides the COLC statistics by database and branch and remotely—all from one vendor so very standardized! Yet until the product is proven, reference librarians want access to the native interfaces. Use of the native interfaces will not be counted by the Webfeat statistics manager; thus, for a time we will be adding together two counts.

PROBLEM 2: Though it is not surprising in hindsight, we did not expect to have to separate the counts for the subscriptions we pay for from those the state library pays for. For the field test, we only did this for one month so it was not a major issue. For the PLDS, we were asked for an annual total, which is a much bigger effort. Since we'd just completed the field test, we are going to take the percentage of total use for HPL subscribed databases, and apply that percentage to the annual total for last year.

SOLUTION 2: We total our monthly database statistics with a PERL program that posts the statistics to a webpage that all staff can view. The statistics are assigned variables with common prefixes so the program knows which statistics to add together. For next fiscal year, we will re-assign variables and re-write the program so that the state library HPL statistics and HPL's own statistics are subtotaled. Then we will have monthly and annual totals for both national statistical needs and local political needs. We don't know what we will do if ownership changes mid-year as it often does. I'm counting on George being a real good programmer!

PROBLEM 3/SOLUTION 3: I'd still like to see a place on the web I can consult when I don't know which vendor statistic to use for each database statistic. **If such** an effort is not already begun by **someone else**, I **have enough information to make a really** good start. If our national database **statistics** are **going to be meaningful**, **this** has to happen.

GRIPE: "Fulltext titles **available by** subscription" **took** me about eight **hours to collect**. **Not all** of the producers/vendors do a superb job of attaching ISSNs to their holdings lists so de-duping titles required expert rather than average skills with Access. If I only have to do this once a year I can manage it, but if it were easier to do, I could keep monthly totals for internal use—if there is one.

MAJOR GOAL FOR NEXT YEAR: Confession time. We'd never separated "Virtual Visits" by internal and external visits until the field test asked us to do it. Our webmaster separated the count for us for five months worth of data. All five months showed external use hovering around 50%. I'd guessed it was high and have always known that we should be working harder to get a handle on remote use. Seeing numbers on paper made this real.